

APPROVED

TOWN OF WESTFORD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SPECIAL MEETING

MINUTES

DATE: September 30, 2003

TIME: 7:05 P.M.

PLACE: J.V. Fletcher Library

PRESENT: Christopher Romeo, Robert Jefferies, Allan Loiselle,
James Silva

ABSENT: Dini Healy-Coffin

OTHERS

PRESENT: Steve Ledoux-Town Manager, Members of the Affordable
Housing Committee, Members of the Community
Preservation Committee, Audience Members

Discussion of CPC Application/Affordable Housing

The Board met to discuss the amended CPC application that was made for \$1.5M to subsidize 18 affordable units in the Abbott Mill project. The Board reviewed the amended application.

Jefferies was concerned that the Town is being asked to invest a considerable amount of money. Jefferies pointed out that the affordable units are very small and stated that the Town would be paying above contractor costs for those units.

Loiselle asked if the application goes to Town Meeting would other 40B projects be able to file and be grandfathered or would the Town be grandfathered. Romeo stated that DHCD has to approve the Town's Housing Plan which should be completed by January, 2004. Romeo believed that if a 40B project was filed prior to the Housing Plan approval the developer would be grandfathered. Loiselle was concerned with spending \$1.5M if 40B projects are coming in nevertheless. Loiselle asked how this application might affect the Stepinski property and the East Boston Camps. Silva stated that an application has been made to the CPC for \$700,000 for the Stepinski property with the remainder coming from the Water Department. Ledoux stated that he did not have any information on the East Boston Camps as yet. Ledoux stated that an appraisal is needed on the East Boston Camps site.

Jefferies was concerned that there are many unanswered questions. Silva stated that if the Board approves sending the application to the CPC the Town can work on getting those questions answered. Silva stated that if the Board does not send the application the Town loses an opportunity for affordable housing.

Andrea Peraner-Sweet, Affordable Housing Committee, reported that the Affordable Housing Committee voted to withdraw the application after lengthy discussions at two meetings due to the number of unanswered questions, the lack of a site plan, the lack of financials and the lack of a business plan. Peraner-Sweet also reported that some of the members were concerned with how this would appear on Town Meeting floor, i.e., putting money in a developer's pocket. Peraner-Sweet stated that the Committee was also concerned with the conditions attached to the developer's letter. Peraner-Sweet assured the Board that the Affordable Housing Committee is committed to affordable housing in Westford.

Mary Trubey, Affordable Housing Committee, stated that the concerns with the conditions related to the question of how one board can negotiate conditions on behalf of another board. Silva stated that the Town can make a counteroffer and negotiate with the developer. Trubey disagreed and stated that not all of the conditions were negotiable.

Beverly Johansen, Forge Village Improvement Association, stated that the developer attended a neighborhood meeting in May with the idea of going before the Town boards to make presentations and get input. Johansen felt that the questions should have been answered earlier. Johansen stated that if this project goes through the Town will get affordable housing, the ability to stop 40B projects for two years, and tax revenue for the Town. Johansen stated that the Abbott Mill project will be going forward regardless of the CPC application. Johansen stated that some of the elderly residents in the villages feel that all of the affordable housing is being built in the villages.

Loiselle asked for information regarding the tax implications of a 40B project, the cost of the infrastructure, the number of school students, and the cost of new schools. Loiselle was concerned that this might despoil what the Town is trying to do with the Stepinski property and the East Boston Camps.

Jefferies pointed out that the Town Meeting last year said they did not want to spend money on land.

It was moved by Silva, seconded by Romeo for discussion, that the Board of Selectmen sponsor the CPC application for the Abbott Mill in the amount of \$1.5M.

Loiselle was concerned with the amount of \$1.5M as he did not know where that number came from. Romeo suggested amending the motion to an amount up to \$1.5M in order to negotiate with the developer.

It was moved by Loiselle, seconded by Romeo for discussion, to amend the motion to not exceed an amount up to \$1.5M for negotiations, the sum would be bonded and reimbursed from CPA funds over ten (10) years.

Diane Holmes, Board of Assessors and Affordable Housing Committee, stated that the prior developer, Ted Carmen, provided the Assessors with information regarding tax revenue generated. Holmes stated that the current developer has not provided any information to the Assessors. Holmes asked if the Board was making a decision without adequate information. Romeo stated that tonight is the deadline for the CPC application.

Romeo asked the Board to think about committing themselves to looking at the siege of 40B projects for a solution.

Jefferies reiterated his concerns.

VOTE ON MOTION MADE BY SILVA AND AMENDED BY LOISELLE: 3 IN FAVOR WITH 1 OPPOSED (Jefferies) and 1 ABSENT (Healy-Coffin).

Adjournment

It was moved by Loiselle, seconded by Silva, and VOTED 4 IN FAVOR WITH 1 ABSENT (Healy-Coffin), to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Steve Ledoux, Town Manager

Christopher Romeo, Chairman